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# Texas Department of Health

## The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

October 30, 2003

### Hot Topics



#### Lab Official Opening

The grand opening ceremony for the Public Health Laboratory in Austin will be at 10 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 30, outside the main entrance to the new lab. Scheduled speakers include Texas Board of Health Chair George McCleskey and Commissioner of Health Eduardo Sanchez. The Texas Department of Public Safety color guard will provide a flag ceremony. Tours of the lab will be limited to dignitaries and media (morning) and lab-staff families (afternoon). Other TDH employees may sign up online at [http://online/lab/lab\\_tour.htm](http://online/lab/lab_tour.htm) to request a tour of the lab at a later date. *For more information, contact Marsha Canright, Office of Communications, at (512) 458-7400 or e-mail [marsha.canright@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:marsha.canright@tdh.state.tx.us).*



#### Influenza Strikes Texas

Influenza is classified as “widespread” in Texas; reports reflect cases in seven of the state’s 11 Regions, as of Oct. 27. In news releases and radio news feeds in English and Spanish and in News Updates on the TDH Web site, TDH has strongly recommended getting a flu shot. More than 900 TDH employees in Austin received flu shots last week and additional clinics are scheduled for early November. *For more information, contact Neil Pascoe, TDH Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail [neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us).*



#### Texas Records 338 Human Cases of West Nile Virus; 20 Deaths

So far this year, Texas has recorded 338 human cases of West Nile virus and 20 deaths. The 20 people who died were residents of Burnet, Cherokee, Ellis, El Paso, Harris (2), Hidalgo (2), Lubbock (2), Montgomery, Potter, Randall (2), San Patricio, Taylor, Travis, Washington, Wharton and Wichita counties.

Human cases have occurred in the following counties: Andrews (2), Angelina (3), Bailey (1), Bexar (4), Brazos (4), Burnet (1), Caldwell (1), Callahan (2), Cameron (7), Castro (3), Chambers (1), Cherokee (1), Clay (1), Collin (3), Cochran (1), Cooke (2), Dallas (44), Deaf Smith (3), Denton (5), Donley (1), Ector (3), Ellis (4), El Paso (31), Erath (1), Falls (1), Floyd (1), Galveston (1), Gray (1), Gregg (6), Hale (4), Hall (1), Harris (37), Harrison (1), Hector (1), Hemphill (1), Hidalgo (12), Hockley (1), Hunt (2), Hutchinson (1), Jefferson (5), Johnson (3), Kaufman (1), Lamb (1), Lubbock (21), Maverick (1), Midland (6), Montgomery (17), Moore (1), Nacogdoches (1), Nueces (1), Oldham (1), Orange (3), Panola (2), Polk (1), Potter (3), Randall (17), Rusk (1), San Patricio (2), Shackelford (1), Smith (6), Starr (2), Swisher (2), Tarrant (14), Taylor (2), Terry (1),

Tom Green (1), Travis (12), Waller (1), Washington (1), Webb (1), Wharton (1), Wichita (3) Willacy (1), Wise (1) and Wood (1) .

West Nile has been detected in humans, birds, mosquitoes or horses in 156 Texas counties in 2003. In 2002 — the first year West Nile was found in Texas — the virus was detected in 213 of Texas' 254 counties. Last year, there were 202 human cases, including 13 deaths. *For more information contact Jim Schuermann, Zoonosis Control Division, at (512) 458-7255 or e-mail [jim.schuermann@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:jim.schuermann@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **New Center for Public Health Preparedness and Response (CPHPR)**

Effective Nov. 1, the Office of the State Epidemiologist and the Office of Emergency Preparedness will be combined to form the new Center for Public Health Preparedness and Response (CPHPR). The consolidation of these two units marks the next milestone in TDH's ongoing commitment to developing an integrated public health preparedness and response system, which addresses bioterrorism, natural epidemics, other public health threats, emergencies and disasters in Texas. As a central source of scientific, public health and emergency management expertise for developing and coordinating preparedness, mitigation and response and recovery activities, the CPHPR will help local jurisdictions prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters in a manner that will protect property and safeguard lives.

Under the guidance of Dennis Perrotta, the center will continue to exercise a leadership role in scientific study, public health planning and coordinating epidemic detection, surveillance and response activities throughout Texas. Leadership for the center's program development and strategic planning will continue to be provided by Francesca Kupper. Director of operations will be Rolando Garza. The CPHPR will continue to coordinate the Texas asthma initiative and a new emerging-infections program. *For more information, contact Dennis Perrotta, Office of the State Epidemiologist, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail [dennis.perrotta@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:dennis.perrotta@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **House Bill 15 (Informed Consent) Update**

A public meeting was held at TDH on Oct. 21 to obtain final public comment on informational materials pertaining to abortion developed by TDH as required under H.B.15, the "Woman's Right to Know" act. TDH initiated the development of the informational materials by convening a six-member work group of health-care providers. Three public meetings were held throughout August during which work group members and others provided comment on draft materials developed by TDH staff. The TDH Web site was available from early August until Oct. 21 for the public to review and comment on drafts of the materials. On Oct. 21, the public was invited to provide written or verbal comment and to view photographs and other details of the draft informational materials. During the public meeting, 22 individuals provided comment on the draft prepared by TDH. Additional written comments were also submitted.

TDH has finalized the Women's Right to Know informational materials and has begun final editing and Spanish translation of the document and the directory of resources that is also required. *For more information, contact Margaret Mendez, Bureau of Women and Children Services, at (512) 458-7796 or e-mail [margaret.mendez@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:margaret.mendez@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **347 Children Removed from CSHCN Waiting List**

After close review of the Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) projected expenditures in relation to available funds, TDH developed a plan to remove 347 children/clients from the waiting list to begin receiving health care benefits. Letters were mailed Oct. 27 notifying the clients and their families that, as of Oct. 1, the CSHCN program will cover their health care benefits. Of the 347 clients, 304 are in the highest priority group for removal from the waiting list as they are children under the age of 21 with an urgent need for health care benefits. *For more information, contact Sam Cooper, CSHCN Division, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-3104, or e-mail [sam.cooper@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:sam.cooper@tdh.state.tx.us).*

## **Consolidation Updates**



### **Update on HHSC Consolidation Activities**

Commissioner Sanchez provided a functional overview of TDH to executives at the Health and Human Services Commission on Oct. 6. He discussed the critical public health mission of the agency along with the provision of client services.

On October 21, the HB 2292 Transition Legislative Oversight Committee met to receive HHSC's draft Transition Plan and to take public testimony. The timeframe for creation of the new Department of State Health Services is Spring/Summer 2004. To define the process for agencies to work on the transitions, HHSC drafted Project Charters that name current CEOs as Project Directors. We have been asked to provide input on the drafts by October 31.

HHSC has initiated work on consolidation of eligibility functions. TDH staff have been working on a functional review of eligibility and will serve on the workgroup.



### **Purchasing and Contract Administration Consolidation**

Staff members are performing in-scope functions transferred to HHSC Oct. 1. Robert Morris was named acting director of the consolidated procurement function on Oct. 9. Bob Burnette was named acting assistant director on Oct. 20. Morris is reviewing the organizational structure of the new division. Standardization and improvement efforts on procurement policies, procedures and processes have begun. A contract process-improvement work group was formed to address improvements and standardization of client service contracting and monitoring practices and to develop a Web site. Melanie Doyle was named to be the TDH representative on this work group. *For more information, contact Bob Burnette at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-6951, or e-mail [bob.burnette@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:bob.burnette@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Civil Rights Consolidation**

Staff members are performing in-scope functions transferred to HHSC on Oct. 1. Herman Horn was selected to direct the HHS System Civil Rights Office. *For more information, contact Herman Horn at (512) 458-7627 or e-mail [herman.horn@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:herman.horn@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Planning and Evaluation Consolidation**

Rick Allgeyer was named acting director of the consolidated planning and evaluation function on Oct. 9. HHSC indicated that staff performing in-scope functions will transfer in the near future. *For more information, contact Rick Danko, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-6566, or e-mail [rick.danko@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:rick.danko@tdh.state.tx.us); or Elaine Powell, at (512) 458-7303 or e-mail [elaine.powell@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:elaine.powell@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Information Technology Consolidation**

A consolidation work group finalized the list of in-scope functions. HHSC directed agencies to have relevant staff performing in-scope functions complete a survey gathering information about time spent on the various functions. The survey was submitted on Oct. 13. A list of all Information Resources staff in IS and the IT Administrative Service Centers has been requested and is being finalized. The Nov. 1 date for consolidation has been delayed and a new date has not been set yet. The new HHSC CIO position closed on Oct. 17. Agencies have been asked to begin providing HHSC a monthly Information Resources report showing staffing changes, contract expenditures, and information on major projects. *For more information, contact Tom Thornton at (512) 458-7271 or e-mail [tom.thornton@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:tom.thornton@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Ombudsman Consolidation**

The consolidation proposal will be presented to HHSC Commissioner Albert Hawkins this week. Under the proposal, legislative inquiries on behalf of a constituent as well as customer relations would remain at the individual agencies. A recommendation has been made that information and referral be studied by the yet-to-be-formed Information and Referral Consolidation Work Group. The study of 800 numbers is a joint project of both work groups. One result may be to recommend that these numbers be routed through the 211 Internet back bone to save costs. This would require additional capital authority. A list of terms has been developed as well as an overview of current customer service activities at each agency. Next steps are to review data elements from various customer service automated systems for use in the potential development of a consolidated system and begin development of a standardized policy and procedure manual. *For more information, contact Jackie McDonald, at (512) 458-7484 or e-mail [jackie.mcdonald@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:jackie.mcdonald@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Financial Services Consolidation**

HHS CFOs continue meeting to finalize recommendations on in-scope functions for consolidation. Financial Services staff, also are participating in a project to establish a common budget-development process for all HHS agencies, with the goal of having the process in place Sept. 1, 2004. *For more information, contact Machele Pharr, at (512) 458-77640 or e-mail [machele.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:machele.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Consolidation Work Group for the Office of the Inspector General**

There are a number of subgroups meeting to work on various phases of this consolidation. Updates are as follows:

- The IT work group revised the organizational chart, staffing requirements and list of resources. A final draft of the entire document should be distributed next week for review.
- The Evaluations and Inspections group reviewed and discussed the preliminary draft, reworked key functions and risks and further refined the

organizational chart. A final draft should be ready for approval next week in time for final submission.

- The Investigations group approved a draft of the proposed organization. Review on all the recommendations of functions, staffing and organization will be completed and a final report submitted on Oct. 30.
- The Internal Affairs work group is reviewing the preliminary draft. Three new issues/concerns were added to the report along with updates to the organizational chart. The work group will meet next week to finalize the report and submit it to the HHSC coordinator.
- The Audit work group leader, David Griffith, made a presentation to the Office of the Inspector General Steering Committee. The work group has prepared a functional review document that Griffith is finalizing for submission on Oct. 31.
- The Medicaid Program Integrity work group met and edited the functional review. Plans are to complete the document by early next week. No further meetings are planned.
- The Special Counsel work group met on Oct. 21 and discussed specific language to be included in a final report to be issued next week. Specifically, Special Counsel Key Function language was reviewed and revised.

*For more information, contact Lonzo Kerr, at (512) 458-7431 or e-mail [lonzo.kerr@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:lonzo.kerr@tdh.state.tx.us); or Mark Scott, at (512) 458-7354 or e-mail [mark.scott@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:mark.scott@tdh.state.tx.us).*

## Disease Outbreaks/Investigations



### ***Francisella Tularensis***

TDH's Office of State Epidemiologist, Zoonosis Control Division and Region 6 are working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Harris County Health Department and Houston Health and Human Services on an investigation of *Francisella tularensis*, which was detected in two biowatch air filters and signifies the first time agents with bioterrorism potential have been detected by this system. Querying of local hospitals and veterinarians has revealed no cases of human or domestic animal disease. Field surveillance activities will include collection and testing of rodents and other wild animals as well as ectoparasites. *For more information, contact Dana Beckham, Zoonosis Control Division, at (713) 767-3300 or e-mail [dana.beckham@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:dana.beckham@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Pertussis Cases in Regions 1 and 9/10**

In June through September, Region 1 had three times the usual number of pertussis cases. The region's epidemiology staff has been working to identify cases and contacts and establish disease-control measures including prophylaxis of family members of positively identified cases. The outbreak began in June with a death in Carson County. Subsequently, 16 cases have been identified in eight of the 35 counties without a local public health presence in the region. In addition, Lubbock Public Health Department has confirmed seven cases, and the Amarillo Bi-City-County Health District (Potter and Randall Counties) has identified 33 cases, totaling 57 cases for the region.



There are three cases from Region 9/10 in area hospitals. Regional epidemiology response staff members are investigating clusters of pertussis cases throughout the region. The regional director also assisted with pertussis contact management activities in PHR 1. A total of six confirmed and 13 suspect cases have been investigated. Two infants required hospitalization; both recovered. Antibiotic chemoprophylaxis was prescribed to 55 household and selected school contacts. Active surveillance continues. As medical providers have become aware of the disease prevalence, more testing is being done to confirm diagnoses, though most of those suspect cases are reported back as negative. The last confirmed case was identified on Sept. 29 from Hutchinson County.

The region's epidemiology staff continue to support the local public health departments as requested. *For more information, contact Barry Wilson, Immunization, at (806) 767-0496 or e-mail [barry.wilson@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:barry.wilson@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Influenza Sentinel Provider Surveillance Network**

As of October, TDH had recruited 46 providers from all parts of Texas to report influenza-like illness to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The providers are physicians in family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, and emergency medicine.

During influenza season, sentinel providers report the total number of patient visits for influenza-like illness, which is fever at or above 100 degrees, and cough and sore throat (in the absence of a known cause other than influenza). Participating providers may also submit viral cultures to TDH laboratory.

The data is transmitted once a week to a central data repository at CDC via the Internet, a touch-tone phone or fax. It is combined with other surveillance data to provide a national picture of influenza virus ILI activity in the United States. Influenza viruses are constantly evolving and cause substantial morbidity and mortality (approximately 36,000 deaths every year). The data provided by sentinel providers is critical for monitoring the impact of influenza, which guides prevention and control activities, vaccine strain selection, and patient care.

The most important consideration is that sentinel providers provide critical support for public health in Texas. *For more information, contact Neil Pascoe, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail [neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Shigellosis Cases Increase in Region 11**

The regional epidemiology team has been working in Alice/Jim Wells County and with Cameron and Hidalgo Health Departments regarding an increase in shigellosis cases. An outbreak involving 34 students in Corpus Christi was investigated and another with about 175 students is being conducted in Brownsville. To prevent further spread of shigellosis, all local health departments have received recommendations from the regional director. Office of Border Health and general sanitarians have been dispatched to counties without health departments to increase inspections and provide education for day-care agencies, restaurants and schools. *For more information, contact Brian R. Smith, Regional Director, (956) 444-3202 or e-mail [brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us)*

## Training/Conferences



### Statewide Symposium to Identify Health Improvement Actions

More than 100 representatives of voluntary health associations, hospitals, state and local government agencies, businesses, academic health centers and nonprofit agencies from throughout Texas met at the J.J. Pickle Center in Austin on Sept. 24–25 to continue their collaboration on improving health in Texas. The Texas State Strategic Health Partnership identified actions necessary to accomplish goals in areas such as healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco use, risky sexual behavior, substance abuse and violence, mental health, graduation rates, adult literacy, environmental and consumer hazards and timely immunizations for children and adults. For more information on the proceedings, see the following link: [www.tdh.state.tx.us/oshp/sshp/sshp.htm](http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/oshp/sshp/sshp.htm). For more information, contact Donna Nichols, Family Health, at (512) 458-7261 or e-mail at [donna.nichols@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:donna.nichols@tdh.state.tx.us).



### TDH Hosts Bioterrorism Preparedness Contractors Conference

The Office of Public Health Practice hosted a three-day bioterrorism preparedness conference on the topic “Protect Texas: Tough Questions, Challenging Issues.” More than 400 people with local, state and national groups attended the Oct. 20–22 conference at the Hilton Hotel at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Participants came from all eight Regions and represented more than 50 local health departments. Keynote speaker Joe Davis, team leader for Policy Planning and Evaluation for the CDC Office of Terrorism Preparedness and Emergency Response, was introduced by Dr. Charles Bell, currently Deputy Commissioner for Health Services at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and former TDH Executive Deputy Commissioner. The program included presentations on such topics as hospital preparedness, weapons of mass destruction, regional planning, critical incidence stress management, the Health Alert Network (HAN), communications and quality assurance. The conference was designed to provide information and a network for exchanging ideas for regional and local health department staff, bioterrorism contractors and other professionals involved in bioterrorism and public health preparedness activities. For more information contact Mary Castleberry, Office of Public Health Practice, at (512) 458-7770 or e-mail [mary.castleberry@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:mary.castleberry@tdh.state.tx.us).



### Crisis and Emergency Risk Communications Training

TDH’s Office of Communication is offering a Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication training courses around the state. Participants include local health authorities, public information officers, spokespersons and other administrative staff who must speak to the public during emergency situations. The class is open to staff from hospitals, local government, law enforcement, partner and stakeholder groups, in addition to local and regional public health staff. The class is designed to help in the planning and preparation of crisis communication materials and tools. It also includes opportunities for spokespersons to train in an experiential “face the media” video activity.

Classes have been held in Austin, Arlington, Bryan, El Paso and Midland. Upcoming classes:

- Oct. 30 — Waco (one-day) / Heart of Texas Council of Governments
- Nov. 13–14 — Lubbock / PHR 1
- Dec. 4–5 – Houston / PHR 6/5S
- Dec. 9 – Temple / Central Texas Council of Governments

*For more information, contact Andrea Littlefield, Office of Communications, at (512) 458-7400 or e-mail [andrea.littlefield@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:andrea.littlefield@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Annual Quality Assurance Training**

The Texas Vaccines for Children Program (TVFC) will hold its annual quality assurance training for regions on Nov. 3–5. The training will feature an update and overview of the TVFC, a presentation from the Quality Assurance and Monitoring Division and a presentation by the Texas Medical Foundation regarding the quality assurance contract that is in place for private clinics enrolled in the TVFC. Approximately 50 participants statewide are expected to attend. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Texas Vaccines for Children Program, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail [jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Binational Training Activities**

Ten Against TB (TATB) collaborated with other partners to offer four training opportunities during September. With the TB Education Center and the state of Coahuila, information on TB control in the community was presented on Sept. 4 in Acuña, Coahuila. With Juntos, the state of Chihuahua and the TB Education Center, information on controlling TB in correctional facilities was presented on Sept. 10–12 to approximately 100 participants in Juarez and 60 participants in El Paso.

Ten Against TB Initiative, the Francis J. Curry National TB Training Center and Region 9/10 hosted a clinical TB conference in the Rio Grande Valley. More than 130 participants from Texas and the U.S.-Mexico Border area participated. There were presentations on TB case management and the diagnosis of TB. With the Migrant Clinicians Network and Juntos, information on the binational TB card pilot project was presented in Port Isabel on Sept. 25. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail [charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us) or Jose Moreira, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or email [jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Texas Electronic Disease Surveillance System (TxEDSS)**

On Oct. 1 and 2 a training in infectious disease epidemiology and the use of The Texas Electronic Disease Surveillance System (TxEDSS) was held for epidemiologists and data entry personnel of eight local Texas health departments. The final version of the TxEDSS software was introduced at this training. TxEDSS is an interim system for the collection of information on cases of select infectious diseases in Texas and for the weekly transmission of reports on these diseases to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *For more information, contact Erik Svenkerud, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail [erik.svenkerud@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:erik.svenkerud@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Bioterrorism Training**

On Oct. 11, Thomas Betz, M.D., M.P.H., gave a presentation on potential agents that are likely to be used in a bioterrorism act at the Continuing Medical Education session of



Texas Association of Community Health Centers' 20th Annual Conference in Austin. Participants included 20 medical directors of community health centers. Participants learned about the primary infectious agents that might be used as bioterrorism agents (anthrax, small pox, plague, botulinum toxin, tularemia, hemorrhagic fevers), gained an understanding of the planned public health responses to bioterrorism events and were made aware of the roles and interactions between the medical and criminal professionals in response to acts of bioterrorism. *For more information contact Tom Betz, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail [tom.betz@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:tom.betz@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Animal Control Officer (ACO) Training Courses**

During August, the Zoonosis Control Program hosted two two-day Basic Animal Control Officer (ACO) Training Courses in Temple. Thirty-two students from animal control and animal welfare agencies attended. The students were from Bastrop, Bell, Brazos, Caldwell, Grimes, Hamilton, Hill, Lee, McLennan, Travis, and Williamson Counties. This course presented information on rabies control, animal control laws, animal capture and restraint, humane care of animals and zoonotic diseases. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Control Program, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2451, or e-mail [beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Texas EMS Conference 2003**

The annual Texas EMS Conference, scheduled for Nov. 22–26 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio, will include more than 130 different EMS continuing education classes. Approximately 3,000 registrants, presenters, vendors, volunteer workers and staff are expected to participate. The Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council will meet on Nov. 23 at the Marriott River Center Hotel; standing committees and task forces will meet on Nov. 22–23. *For more information, contact Kelly Harrell, Bureau of Emergency Management, at (512) 834-6700 or e-mail [kelly.harrell@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:kelly.harrell@tdh.state.tx.us).*

## **Administration**



### **TDH Hires Minority Health Director**

Durquia Guillen will become director of TDH's Office of Minority Health on Nov. 21. Guillen has worked in the Office of the Secretary of State as chief of staff to Gwen Shea and was former director of operations for the Healthy Kids Corporation. She has served as director of Information Services for the National Latino Children's Institute; chief clerk for the House Committee on Higher Education; and administrative aide to former Austin Mayor Gus Garcia. Guillen holds a Master's Degree from the LBJ School of Public Affairs. *For more information, contact Mary Soto, Office of Public Health Practice, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-6559, or e-mail [mary.soto@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:mary.soto@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Management-to-Staff Budget Reductions**

On Sept. 30, the Comptroller of Public Accounts issued the allocation to state agencies of the reduction resulting from the review of management-to-staff ratios. For FY04, TDH's appropriations were reduced to \$1,246,405 general revenue (GR), \$602,080 GR

dedicated and \$2,084,205 federal. Additional reductions were made for FY05, which are \$2,492,810 GR, \$1,204,160 GR dedicated, and \$4,168,410 federal. Although these reductions are significantly below the amounts that were originally proposed by the Legislature, to achieve these reductions still will require the agency to make difficult choices. *For more information, contact Machel Pharr, Chief Financial Officer, at (512) 458-7426 or e-mail [machelle.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:machelle.pharr@tdh.state.tx.us).*



#### **EMS Field Office Moves from Temple to Austin**

Offices for the EMS field staff who handle the Austin, Bryan, Temple and Waco areas are moving from Temple to Austin. The decision was made because Austin and surrounding areas have the highest concentration of EMS providers in this region and the current lease in Temple will not be renewed. This action will save money on rent since the field staff will occupy space in the current Austin offices. Personnel applications, course notifications and continuing education applications should be sent to the Austin address (8407 Wall St., Suite N402, Austin, Texas 78754) beginning Nov. 3, 2003. Testing will continue in the Temple offices for the next three to six months until suitable sites can be identified elsewhere. *For more information, contact Kathy Perkins, Bureau of Emergency Management, at (512) 834-6740 or e-mail [kathy.perkins@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:kathy.perkins@tdh.state.tx.us).*



#### **Health and Human Services (HHS) Printing Services Wins Audit Approval**

HHS Printing Services, which is comanaged by TDH and the Department of Human Services, was granted a new franchise agreement by the Council on Competitive Government (CCG) following an intensive audit this past summer. The CCG conducted audits on all state-operated print shops in Travis County. Only three were approved: HHS Printing Services, the Texas Building and Procurement Commission and the Texas Workforce Commission. As required by the CCG, services are provided at full cost recovery. Agencies previously served by state print shops that did not win CCG approval are now sending some of their printing to HHS Printing Services. New HHS customers include the Texas Department of Transportation, the Office of the Consumer Credit Commissioner, and the Attorney General's Office. *For more information, contact John Moses, HHS Printing Services, Bureau of Resource Management, at (512) 458-7205 or e-mail [john.moses@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:john.moses@tdh.state.tx.us).*



#### **Survey of Organizational Excellence**

TDH is wrapping up the 2001–02 Survey of Organizational Excellence (SOE) cycle. The next survey will be administered December. In preparation for the next survey, staff is developing the 20 agency-specific questions that will be included in the new all-online version of the survey.

A series of messages is being sent in October and November to all TDH employees via posters, newsletters and “Rounds with the Commissioner” e-mails focusing attention on agency improvements since last survey. These achievements include a new performance evaluation system; a new supervisory/management development program; improved internal communications across the agency; a new policy development system and policy manual; and a new correspondence tracking system.

The University of Texas Excellence Group, the organization that administers the SOE, has pointed out that achievements such as these are major successes in an agency this size. *For more information, contact Robin L. Scott, SOE Coordinator, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-6114, or e-mail [robin.scott@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:robin.scott@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Hospital Construction Project Updates**

Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Health Services District Outpatient Clinic and Ambulatory Surgery Center Project will present a schematic design to the RGV Health Services District (HSD) Board on Oct. 22 in Weslaco. This project will replace the present South Texas Health Care System buildings and is scheduled to be completed in November 2005.

The Texas Center for Infectious Disease's new 75-bed, negative-air isolation facility, which was to be constructed at the present location in southeast San Antonio, was redirected by legislative rider to be built on property adjacent to the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. The specific site is being negotiated between UT, TDH and the Legislative Budget Board. Once a location is approved, the project will take approximately 30 months to complete. *For more information, contact David McCormick, Hospital Construction Project, at (512) 458-7242 or e-mail [david.mccormick@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:david.mccormick@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Health Insurance Portability and Accounting Act (HIPAA)**

HHSC and its departments, including TDH, were ready for implementation of the electronic data interchange portion of HIPAA by the Oct. 16 national deadline. TDH anticipates several weeks of analysis and corrective action to complete the implementation. *For more information, contact Judy Sandberg, Information Systems, at (512) 458-7271 or e-mail [judy.sandberg@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:judy.sandberg@tdh.state.tx.us).*

## **Awards / Recognition**



### **CDC Epi Consortium Awards**

Texas CDC Epidemiology Studies Consortium members recently received awards from CDC to work on several task orders:

- Task Order No. 8 — A National Genotyping Registry for a Molecular Epidemiological Analysis of Multidrug-Resistant *M. Tuberculosis*;
- Task Order No. 9 — Enhanced Surveillance to Identify Missed Opportunities for TB Prevention in Foreign-Born Populations in the United States and Canada;
- Task Order 10: Assessing TB Surveillance and Action for Performance and Cost;
- Task Order No. 13: Prospective Cohort Study of Risk Factors for Acceptance of, Adherence to and Toxicity from Treatment for LTBI; and
- Task Order 14: Culturally Appropriate TB Educational Materials for Leaders and Staff of Hispanic Services Organizations.

*For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail [charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### Awards for Writing Excellence

The National Public Health Information Coalition (NPHIC) presented two awards for writing excellence, a bronze and a silver, to TDH during the awards ceremony at its national conference Oct. 5–8. A feature news story, “*TDH Continues Rabies Fight Through Bait Drop Program*,” written by Emily Palmer of the Office of Communications and the Commissioner’s Commentary on “*Vaccines: First Line of Defense in War on Disease*,” co-authored by Commissioner Sanchez and Palmer.

NPHIC is a national organization of state and local public health communicators organized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1987. *For more information, contact Emily Palmer, Office of Communication, at (512) 458-7400 or e-mail [emily.palmer@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:emily.palmer@tdh.state.tx.us).*

## Media Campaigns



### Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Awareness Media Campaign

The Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention Training and Public Education Branch (TPEB) rolled out the TDH STD Awareness Media Campaign in the Houston/Galveston media market on Sept. 15. The campaign has run for five weeks, with the possibility of an additional sixth week pending availability of funds. This is a paid radio and TV campaign targeting teens, with an emphasis on African-American teen girls ages 15–19. The campaign utilizes the same spots that previously were used in the Tyler/Longview and Dallas/Fort Worth markets.

The spots can be seen at [www.tdh.state.tx.us/hivstd/pie/stdmedia.htm](http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/hivstd/pie/stdmedia.htm).

In addition to media placement, Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing (SMAM) has developed a “splash” Web page for the campaign at [www.stdfacts.org](http://www.stdfacts.org) that will link users to relevant sections of the TDH Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention Web site. Branch staff members are working with the City of Houston Health and Human Services Department to ensure coordination with existing outreach activities. The branch currently is working with SMAM to obtain media time in Austin, San Antonio, Texarkana, Tyler/Longview, Temple/Waco, Lubbock and Amarillo. Plans are for the campaign to run in these additional markets mid-October through mid-November. In addition, TPEB is currently exploring the feasibility of producing a video of several short, STD-related educational vignettes that could be shown on a “loop” in waiting rooms in STD clinics around the state. *For more information, contact Greg Beets, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail [greg.beets@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:greg.beets@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### West Nile Virus Information Campaign Airs in Major Texas Markets

The West Nile Prevention Public Service Announcement is now playing in all Texas media markets including Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, El Paso, the Rio Grande Valley, Midland-Odessa and Tyler. Airtime donated by Texas broadcasters has surpassed \$600,000. The PSA is playing in both daytime and primetime segments. *For more information contact Marsha Canright, Director, Office of Communications, (512) 458-7400 or e-mail [marsha.canright@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:marsha.canright@tdh.state.tx.us).*

## Program Updates



### **\$1.2 Million Federal Grant Enhances Disease Surveillance**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has awarded \$1.2 million to TDH to enhance infectious disease surveillance along the state's border with Mexico. TDH applied to CDC's Emerging Infections Program for the money. The program was established in 1995 to address a national need to improve the public health system's ability to detect, identify and respond to health threats from new, re-emerging and vaccine-preventable infections.

Texas is the 11th state to receive funding from the CDC program. Other states are California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York and Tennessee. The program supports active surveillance to find cases of certain serious bacterial infections, to identify and control food-borne illnesses such as salmonellosis and shigellosis and to quickly identify the causes of outbreaks to control the spread of disease. *For more information, contact Julie Rawlings, Office of the State Epidemiologist, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail [julie.rawlings@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:julie.rawlings@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Funding for Male Involvement Projects**

The TDH, Bureau of Women's Health, Title X Program, received a notice of grant award from the Office of Population Affairs and DHHS' Region VI Office of Family Planning for \$350,000 per year for five years. This funding will allow TDH to develop and manage two research demonstration projects designed to link educational programs for young men ages 17–25 with male-focused clinical family-planning services. By collaborating with Planned Parenthood of South Texas (\$199,000) in Corpus Christi, and Baylor College of Medicine's Teen Health Clinic (\$150,000) in Houston, TDH will implement two projects that bridge: 1) adolescent and young adult male reproductive health education; 2) health education and health services; and 3) communication between young adult males and their partners concerning reproductive choices. Clinical services will be implemented in the second year of the project. *For more information, contact Alex Fisher, Family Planning Title X, at (512) 458-7796 or e-mail [alex.fisher@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:alex.fisher@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **House Bill 341**

House Bill 341, effective Sept. 1, requires physicians, midwives, hospitals and birthing centers who provide prenatal care to a pregnant woman during gestation or at delivery to provide the woman with a current resource list of professional organizations that offer postpartum counseling and assistance to parents. TDH maintains the list. Health-care providers must document that each woman received this information and the documentation must be retained for a minimum of three years. The resource list is maintained by TDH and can be accessed at [www.tdh.state.tx.us/mch/depression.htm](http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/mch/depression.htm). The legislation can be accessed at [www.tdh.state.tx.us/mch/default.htm](http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/mch/default.htm). *For more information contact Chan McDermott, Bureau of Women's Health, at (512) 458-7796 or e-mail [chan.mcdermott@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:chan.mcdermott@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Perinatal Depression**



The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is encouraging collaborations between ob-gyns and governmental and community-based organizations. These collaborations, known as providers partnership agreements, have been formed in 17 states, including Texas, to address particular women's health issues. Staff members from TDH and the Postpartum Resource Center of Texas are working with ACOG to form such a partnership in Texas to address perinatal depression.

The possible scope of the project includes the development of universal screening guidelines, pharmacological treatment protocols, provider training initiatives, collaborative patient information brochures and other efforts as suggested by team members. Invited partners include medical professional organizations, the Mental Health Association, relevant state agencies, community-based organizations and professionals. The first meeting was held Oct. 24. *For more information contact Chan McDermott, Bureau of Women's Health, at (512) 458-7796 or e-mail [chan.mcdermott@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:chan.mcdermott@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **TDH Lifts Selenium-Based Advisories for Three East Texas Reservoirs**

TDH has lifted advisories in effect since 1992 that had recommended limiting consumption of fish from Brandy Branch Reservoir in Harrison County, Welsh Reservoir in Titus County and Martin Creek Reservoir in Rusk and Panola counties. Advisories were issued because of high selenium levels in the fish. But the latest TDH testing of fish samples from the reservoirs found that selenium levels no longer pose a health risk. Selenium is an essential trace element in the human diet. But long-term consumption of high levels of it may cause hair and fingernail loss and kidney, liver, nerve and circulatory system damage. The testing was funded by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. *For more information, contact Kirk Wiles, TDH Seafood Safety Division, (512) 719-0215 or e-mail [kirk.wiles@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:kirk.wiles@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Breast Cancer Awareness Month Wreath Ceremony**

The Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program, in partnership with the American Cancer Society, the Governor's Commission for Women, the Texas Cancer Council and the Susan G. Komen Foundation, sponsored the Seventh Annual Wreath Ceremony on Sept. 30 at the University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing Community Women's Wellness Center. Dr. Mary Lou Adams from UT-Austin School of Nursing and Texas First Lady Anita Perry encouraged friends, family members and co-workers to get screened for breast cancer. Two breast cancer survivors spoke of how breast cancer has affected their lives. The wreath will be on display at nursing school through October. A reception for breast cancer survivors was held following the ceremony. *For more information, contact Clare Wolf, Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program, at (512) 458-7644 or e-mail [clare.wolf@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:clare.wolf@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Texas Hearing Program Scores High for Second Year**

The National Campaign for Hearing Health (NCHH) has issued its annual report card rating state newborn hearing and screening programs. For the second consecutive year, Texas has received a rating of excellent because of its high screening rate and exemplary statewide detection and intervention program. The Texas Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (TEHDI) Program has been operational for two years and has received high

marks both years. *For more information, contact Elaine Braslow, TEHDI Program, Child Wellness Division, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-3829, or e-mail [elaine.braslow@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:elaine.braslow@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Child Passenger Safety Partnership with NAACP**

TDH Safe Riders has begun a partnership with the Texas branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and local chapters to improve child passenger safety (CPS) among minority communities. Two training sessions were provided to 21 chapter representatives at the statewide NAACP conference in Denton Oct. 2–4, culminating with a community child safety seat checkup at Fouts Field in Denton. The trainings were designed to equip chapters to conduct CPS presentations to parents and caregivers in their communities. More activities with state and local chapters are planned. *For more information contact Chris Harvey, Safe Riders, Traffic Safety Program, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-2821, or e-mail [chris.harvey@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:chris.harvey@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Healthy Start, Grow Smart**

Texas Health Steps has taken the lead in implementing the Healthy Start, Grow Smart (HSGS) project in Texas. HSGS is a revitalization of the Take Time For Kids project through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. HSGS is a 12-month project that encompasses the distribution of 13 pamphlets, covering newborns through 12 months of age, to the parents of infants who are Medicaid eligible. Distribution of the pamphlets, available in English and Spanish, will begin during December 2003. *For more information, contact Dr. Linda Altenhoff, Texas Health Steps and Medical Transportation Division, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 1-3001, or e-mail [linda.altenhoff@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:linda.altenhoff@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **New Designated Trauma Facility and Emergency Medical Services Account**

The 78th Texas Legislature established a new funding source for entities within the Texas EMS/Trauma System. Revenue estimates start around \$100 million in FY04 and rise to \$200-plus million by FY07. The majority of the monies (96 percent) are earmarked for uncompensated trauma care in designated trauma facilities. EMS firms will receive 2 percent and Regional Advisory Councils 1 percent.

Stakeholders are being notified not to expect initial disbursement until late FY04; however, if a significant amount of money accumulates earlier, it will be distributed. Bureau of Emergency Management staff have been meeting with a number of stakeholder groups to get input and began discussions with the Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC) Trauma Systems Committee in late August. An initial draft implementation rule was scheduled to be reviewed at an Oct. 27 Trauma Systems Committee meeting and additional discussions will be held at GETAC meetings in November. *For more information, contact Steve Janda, Bureau of Emergency Management, at (512) 834-6700, or e-mail [steve.janda@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:steve.janda@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **CDC Grant Update**

In response to TDH's CDC/HRSA Public Health Preparedness grant application submitted in June, the Office of the State Epidemiologist received the Notice of Cooperative Agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Public Health Preparedness Group. TDH's grant application requested \$60,410,457 and was awarded \$61,460,418. The additional amount included \$5,000 to support TDH's

conducting a forensic epidemiology course developed by CDC. TDH has already conducted two of these courses and approximately four more are being scheduled.

CDC's Notice of Cooperative Agreement also confirmed that Texas will receive \$1,504,866 in additional grant funds specifically to foster collaboration with states on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico Border to enhance early warning infectious disease surveillance. These funds are awarded in Focus Area B (Epidemiology and Surveillance) and are restricted pending the receipt and approval of a proposal for their use from TDH. CDC will, under separate cover, provide guidance for use of these funds and preparation of the proposals.

There were no disapprovals from CDC on this last grant application. Many other states had significant application restrictions or disapprovals for these CDC grant funds.

Texas and TDH will be receiving \$459,905 in direct assistance grant funds as requested in Focus Area D (Chemistry Laboratory Capacity). CDC is awarding one direct assistance grant award per state and it is awarded at the state level to improve capacity for identifying chemical agents. These funds will be used to enhance the TDH chemical lab capacity with additional chemistry lab equipment that CDC is buying and shipping to state public health labs. *For more information, contact Dennis Perrotta, Office of the State Epidemiologist, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail [dennis.perrotta@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:dennis.perrotta@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **HRSA Grant Update**

TDH has received the notice of cooperative agreement award from the Health Resources And Services Administration (HRSA) for the second year of the hospital bioterrorism preparedness effort. The amount is \$33,338,368. TDH is expanding this program beyond hospitals only to community health centers and to EMS systems in counties where there is no hospital or clinic.

The notice included a restriction of 90 percent of the funds until additional information in the form of response to 14 questions is submitted to HRSA and approved. This represents a change from their first-year process used for the recipient states and territories. TDH is drafting those responses currently and anticipate submitting the additional requested information well before the 60-day deadline. *For more information, contact Dennis Perrotta, Office of the State Epidemiologist, at (512) 458-7219 or e-mail [dennis.perrotta@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:dennis.perrotta@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **ImmTrac Director Participates in Immunization Summit**

ImmTrac Acting Director Claude Longoria represented the ImmTrac immunization registry at the Summit on Immunization facilitated by the Joint City/County Commission on Children. The meeting was held in Houston on Oct. 1. Longoria served as a panelist on the Immunization Registry panel. The group discussed the status of the Houston-Harris County Immunization Registries (HHCIR), the benefits of immunization registries and community support needed to develop a fully populated registry. Longoria presented an overview of ImmTrac and expressed interest in exploring collaborative efforts with HHCIR. *For more information, contact Claude Longoria, ImmTrac Registry, Immunization Division, at (512) 458-7284 or e-mail [claudelongoria@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:claudelongoria@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Pharmacy Inventory Control System Project Status Update**

Under the Pharmacy Inventory Control System (PICS) contract modification 9, General Services Administration has extended Northrop Grumman Information Technology's contract term through May 31, 2004. Funding consists of redirected TDH Immunization Program grant monies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The PICS project team is meeting with the Immunization Program to gather requirements for possible PICS modifications prior to implementing new vaccine management business processes. *For more information, contact Dinny Smith, Pharmacy Division, at (512) 458-7500 or e-mail [dinny.smith@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:dinny.smith@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Ten Against TB (TATB) Activities**

The TATB Executive Committee met in Laredo on Sept. 11 to discuss the strategic plan and proposed future activities. Dr. Jesús Zacarías from Nuevo León announced that he will be ending his period as commissioner of health and recommended that TATB choose a new Mexican cochair. The TATB Technical Committee will meet at a date to be determined during the latter part of November so that the results of the discussions on the TATB strategic plan can be presented to the Border Health Commission's December meeting. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447, or e-mail [charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us) or Jose Moreira, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or email [jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:jose.moreira@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Hansen's Disease Program Funding Changes**

On Sept. 15, the National Hansen's Disease Program (NHDP) notified the TB Elimination Division that authorizing legislation does not provide the authority to issue grants for the Ambulatory Care Program. Therefore, it will be necessary to enter into contractual arrangements to provide services instead of grants. The NHDP will issue a request for proposal for a three-year contract. The one-year base period begins Jan. 1, 2004, with two 12-month options. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail [charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Meeting**

On Oct. 8, the director of the TB Elimination Division met with representatives of ICE in Austin to discuss opportunities to prevent TB in foreign-born persons in the United States and other issues relevant to the control of TB along the U.S.-Mexico border. *For more information, contact Charles Wallace, TB Elimination Division, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail [charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:charles.wallace@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Refugee Meetings**

On Oct. 7–10, staff members from the Refugee Health Screening Program attended a national Consultation in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Program-relevant topics that were discussed include unaccompanied alien minors and victims of human trafficking programs; a workshop and presentation on approaches to resettlement of Somali Bantu refugees; refugee health and mental health; use of the new HHS e-grant application system; and best practices for elderly refugees,

language training, employment, child welfare and other areas. A meeting of the Association of Refugee Health Coordinators will include discussions on updating the Refugee Medical Screening Protocol and culturally and linguistically appropriate health materials. *For more information, contact Sam Householder, Refugee Health Screening Program, at (512) 458-7447 or e-mail [sam.householder@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:sam.householder@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Hepatitis C Initiative**

Gary Heseltine, M.D., M.P.H., has been a guest speaker for three presentations:

- The Washington State Hepatitis C Strategic Planning Committee meeting on Sept. 3 in Seattle, Wash, where he spoke on the Texas Hepatitis C Initiative. Attendees included Washington State representatives, advocacy groups and health educators.
- Los Dos Laredos Binational Health Conference in Laredo on Sept. 12, where he spoke on viral hepatitis, chronic liver disease in Texas and the disproportionate impact of liver disease along the border and among minority populations. Attendees included Texas health department representatives and Mexico health representatives, local health authorities and health advocates from both the United States and Mexico.
- The Texas A&M School of Rural Public Health's infectious disease epidemiology class on Oct. 9, where he gave an overview of the hepatitis, examined the progress that has been made in preventing and controlling these infections and discussed the controversy surrounding some public health interventions.

On Oct. 28, TDH hosted the Hepatitis C State Work Group meeting at TDH Austin. Guest speakers included several advocacy group leaders. Attendees included state agency representatives, local health department representatives, advocacy group members, health educators, pharmaceutical representatives, private physicians and their staff and university and institute research staff. TDH staff facilitated and presented updates on the different components of the Texas Hepatitis C Initiative. The meeting's intent was to bring all stakeholders together to discuss current hepatitis C issues, reduce duplication of efforts in raising public awareness, partner on developing educational programs and address specific needs among populations that are disproportionately affected.

On Oct. 30, Dr. Heseltine will present "Hepatitis C and Its Effects on the Mentally Ill in Texas" at a training conference sponsored by Texas MHMR. The conference is for Central Texas MHMR social workers, MHMR counselors and local law enforcement officers who work with and respond to requests for assistance with the mentally ill who also may have hepatitis C. *For more information, contact Gary Heseltine, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail [gary.heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:gary.heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **HIV/STD Strategic Planning**

The Bureau of HIV and STD Prevention Planning Branch is participating in an interagency policy team formed to address improving the system serving clients with, or affected by, substance abuse, mental health and family violence. Dr. Charles Bell from the Health and Human Services Commission is the group's executive sponsor. A proposed action plan will be submitted to agency directors by the end of 2003. *For more information, contact Shirley Broussard, HIV/STD Health Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail [shirley.broussard@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:shirley.broussard@tdh.state.tx.us).*





### **Newborn Screening Testing**

In August 2003, the Newborn Screening (NBS) Laboratory analyzed more than 301,500 tests on about 60,300 newborn screening specimens to provide results for a battery of five different disorders. The NBS Branch also tested 399 additional specimens for a variety of disorders. *For more information, contact Eldridge T. Hutcheson, Biochemistry and Genetics Division, at (512) 458-7430 or e-mail [eldridge.hutcheson@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:eldridge.hutcheson@tdh.state.tx.us)*



### **Abnormal Triple Screens**

The Prenatal Testing laboratory detected 113 abnormal triple screens from 958 maternal serum specimens: 74 indicated risk for Down's syndrome, 27 indicated risk for neural tube defects (NTD), seven indicated risk of trisomy 18 and five indicated risk for Trisomy 18 and Down's syndrome. *For more information, contact Eldridge T. Hutcheson, Biochemistry and Genetics Division, at (512) 458-7430 or e-mail [eldridge.hutcheson@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:eldridge.hutcheson@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Clinical Chemistry Branch Testing**

The College of American Pathologists (CAP) submitted five blood-lead specimens to the Lead Screening Section of the TDH laboratory's Clinical Chemistry Branch. CAP is the laboratory's certification agency as required by federal law. The lead concentrations of the specimens were unknown except to CAP. Accurate test results were required for the laboratory to maintain certification and continue to report test results on human specimens. The test results were evaluated by CAP as 100 percent satisfactory.

The Clinical Chemistry Branch performed 75,016 tests on 36,952 Texas Health Steps and Title V specimens. *For more information, contact Eldridge T. Hutcheson, Biochemistry and Genetics Division, at (512) 458-7430 or e-mail [eldridge.hutcheson@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:eldridge.hutcheson@tdh.state.tx.us).*

## **Regional Updates**

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### **Region 1**

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#### **Public Health Communications Network**

Region 1 has established a "Public Health Communication Network." Recent experiences with disease outbreaks pointed to the need to try and efficiently broaden our public health message delivery capabilities. A comprehensive list of nearly 1,100 public health partners, related state and local agencies and institutions, stakeholders and service providers were contacted to see if they would be interested in receiving regular public health updates. To date, more than 400 of those have joined the network. Interested parties receive regular public health updates of various sorts at least monthly by fax or e-mail. This network does not duplicate the Health Alert Network (HAN) and disseminates generic public health related information, funding-related information and educational opportunities. *For more information, contact Devon Casey, Region 1, at (806) 767-0309 or e-mail [devon.casey@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:devon.casey@tdh.state.tx.us).*



#### **Office of Minority Health Program in Region 1**

In September, Region 1 began its Office of Minority Health (OMH) program. The regional OMH team was assembled, reviewed the priorities of the program and began to assess the region's health disparities needs. Counties with target demographics and health data have been verified. Action plans are being developed to address the needs identified. The three regional OMH team members also have been actively engaged in soliciting participation from other regional staff with expertise in community assessments, stakeholder coalition building and program development to assist in the effort to address minority health issues at the community level. *For more information, contact Tommy Murillo, Office of Minority Health, at (806) 767-0302 or e-mail [tommy.murillo@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:tommy.murillo@tdh.state.tx.us).*

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## Region 4/5 North

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### **Emergency Preparedness Activities**

Region 4/5N staff members recently participated in a three-day disaster simulation sponsored by Gregg County and the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX). The city/county/state exercise involved terrorism scenarios, including bombings, a chemical release and mass decontamination. Brett Hart represents the region as a member of the Disaster District Committee of the Department of Public Safety (District 1B/Tyler area). *For more information, contact Debbie Evans, Epidemiologic Response, at (903) 533-5283 or e-mail [deborah.evans@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:deborah.evans@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Immunization Program**

Region 4/5N held a back-to-school immunizations clinic on Oct. 16 at John Tyler High School in Tyler for students who were noncompliant with school law requirements. About 250 doses were given at the clinic. The region also has been promoting the flu vaccine for Texas Vaccines for Children to all eligible children; thousands of doses have been given since Oct. 1. *For more information, contact Dixie Scott, Immunization Division, at (903) 533-5266 or e-mail [dixie.scott@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:dixie.scott@tdh.state.tx.us).*

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## Region 6/5 South

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### **Public Health Improvement**

The Task Force of the Wharton County Immunization Coalition received county approval on Sept. 22 to use county funds to hire a nurse by the end of October. This allows the immunization efforts of the coalition to continue in the county. As a pilot project, TDH has been providing monthly vaccines at a local clinic site since June 2002 to support the coalition's vaccination efforts. The coalition is applying for grants to support immunization efforts. The Texas Rural Communities, Inc., grant is being sought as well as a local medical foundation grant. Staff from the regional Public Health Nursing and Immunization programs will provide technical support and training for the nurse. *For more information, contact Bernice Richter, Nursing Program, at (979) 732-3662 or e-mail [bernice.richter@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:bernice.richter@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Liberty County Health Awareness Coalition**

The Liberty County Health Awareness Coalition held an interagency networking event on Sept. 17 for the purpose of identifying ways to increase communication among service providers. There were 52 participants from 30 different organizations who attended the event. Representatives from 20 organizations agreed to form an interagency council and meet quarterly. *For more information, contact Sandra Ford, Nursing Program, at (281) 592-0130 or e-mail [sandra.ford@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:sandra.ford@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Public Health Nursing Annual Meeting**

TDH public health nurses in Colorado County held their annual meeting with school nurses from both Colorado and Wharton counties during September to provide updated information on a variety of public health issues, offer technical support and increase communication. Presentations included information from the regional Public Health Preparedness Team. *For more information, contact Bernice Richter, at (979) 732-3662 or e-mail [bernice.richter@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:bernice.richter@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Community Events**

Region 6/5 South Oral Health Services coordinated surveillance clinic sites for three Harris County targeted dental reviews and one Montgomery County targeted dental review during June, July and August. The reviews were conducted at the request of and in conjunction with the Office of Investigation and Enforcement (OIE) at the Health and Human Services Commission for the purpose of quality assurance monitoring of selected active Texas Health Steps (Medicaid) dental providers. Texas Health Steps regional staff contacted potential clients for surveillance examinations through letters, telephone calls and face-to-face interviews.

For the Montgomery County audit on Aug. 14–15, Region 9/10 loaned its two-chair El Paso mobile dental van to Region 6/5 South for use during the Medicaid review. Some 76 Medicaid clients were examined and interviewed by OIE contract dentists and investigators. The regional hygienist aided with charting and radiograph taking at each clinic location, while regional Texas Health Steps staff offered bilingual registration.

The regional dentist and hygienist participated in the annual Matagorda County Preschool Screening in August 2003 at the Bay City Service Center. Eighty-seven preschoolers received dental examinations and accompanying parents/guardians were counseled regarding oral health problems. Other services provided to the children during the preschool activities included weights and measurements, blood-pressure checks, vision and hearing screenings and immunizations. The event was sponsored and coordinated by the Texas Cooperative Extension agent, Texas A&M University System for Matagorda County. *For more information, contact William G. Gray, Regional Dental Program, at (713) 767-3471 or e-mail [william.gray@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:william.gray@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Presentations**

On Sept. 18, Regional Director Dr. Celine Hanson and Texas Rep. Garnett Coleman (D-Houston) were guest speakers at the Houston Hispanic Coalition meeting. Topics of discussion were impact of H.B. 2292 on public health and Houston/Harris County.

On Oct. 1, Dr. Hanson participated in a panel discussion of public health strategies to improve childhood immunization rates at the Joint City County Commission on Children's Summit on Immunization. *For more information, contact Celine Hanson, Regional Director, at (713) 767-3000 or e-mail [celine.hanson@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:celine.hanson@tdh.state.tx.us).*

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## Region 7

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### **McLennan County Rabies Data**

On Aug. 18, the Region 7 Zoonosis Control Program staff presented current and historical McLennan County rabies data at the invitation of the Waco McLennan County Health Department (WMCHD) director to the local Board of Health. As a result, the WMCHD led a group of city and county officials in the development of a template for a rabies control ordinance available for use within the county. WMCHD and Board of Health members are strengthening their response to animal rabies and bite incidents in their jurisdictions because of the increased incidence of rabies. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Control Program, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2451, or e-mail [beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Rabid Animal Incidents**

During September, there was more than a 50 percent increase in the number of rabid animal incidents within Region 7 compared to the month prior. In one instance, a Hill County rabid dog incident resulted in almost 30 people receiving the post-exposure rabies vaccination series. The Hillcrest Baptist Hospital in Waco, a volunteer rabies biological depot for Region 7, was restocked by Region 7 staff three times in three days, on an emergency basis, to meet the need for rabies biologicals. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Control Program, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2451, or e-mail [beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us).*

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## Regions 9/10

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### **New Health Director appointed for Ector County**

Gino Solla has been named health administrator for Ector County Health Department. Solla, a longtime Odessa resident, had been the department's Epidemiology Response Team coordinator. *For more information, contact Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, at (915) 834-7680 or e-mail [miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **CDC Advisory Meeting**

Regional Director Miguel Escobedo represented the U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission at a recent meeting of the Advisory Council for Tuberculosis Elimination. The council includes national TB experts who advised the CDC director and the U.S. Health and Human Services secretary on national TB control policy. *For more information, contact Eva Moya, US Section of the US/Mexico Border Commission, at (915) 532-1006 or e-mail [emoya@borderhealth.net](mailto:emoya@borderhealth.net).*



### **Implementation of Health Border 2010 Initiative**

The regional Office of Border Health hosted a recent sister cities work meeting in Presidio/Ojinaga to begin implementation of Healthy Border 2010 objectives. A community-driven process will be used to achieve objectives in the areas of Chronic Disease, Teen Health and Sexuality, Environmental Health and Emergency Response. Activities are coordinated with the U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission. *For more information, contact Blanca Serrano, Office of Border Health, at (915) 834-7690 or e-mail [blanca.serrano@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:blanca.serrano@tdh.state.tx.us).*



### **Abstinence-Based Reproductive Health Education for Teens**

The regional office and the Austin-based Medical Institute hosted a meeting of El Paso area agencies working on Teen Pregnancy Prevention. The Medical Institute will collaborate to implement prevention projects in Region 9/10. *For more information, contact Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, at (915) 834-7680, or e-mail [miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us).*

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## **Regions 11**

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### **Public Health Concerns Related to Flooding and Mosquito Control**

Region 11 has been actively coordinating with Hidalgo, Cameron, Brooks and Starr counties, the DPS regional emergency manager, the Secretary of State's office, the news media and others regarding public health concerns related to flooding and mosquito control. Staff members have assisted counties with shelters, assessment of risks and making general sanitation recommendations. Tetanus immunization and integrated vector control have been the heart of public health message. *For more information, contact Brian R. Smith, Regional Director, (956) 444-3202 or e-mail [brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us](mailto:brian.smith@tdh.state.tx.us).*